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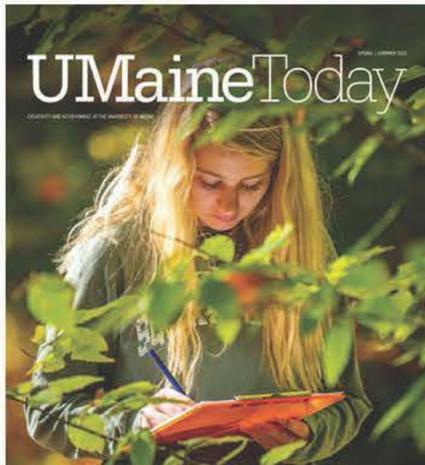
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## UMaine EOC receives inaugural Black Bear Award for Extraordinary Impact

May 19, 2021

This spring, the University of Maine established the Black Bear Award for Extraordinary Impact, focused on recognizing an individual or group that goes above and beyond in performance excellence. Such positive impact is “deep, significant and lasting,” and is reflected campuswide and beyond in the quality of the student and employee experience.

The inaugural recipient of the Black Bear Award for Extraordinary Impact is the UMaine Emergency Operations Center, which since February 2020 has provided and coordinated COVID-19 response for the UMaine and UMM communities.

“UMaine’s EOC is a critical component of the success of our universities and the welfare of our communities. During this pandemic, this group has done outstanding, unparalleled work, day in and day out, to do everything possible to keep us healthy and safe,” says UMaine President Joan Ferrini-Mundy. “At the core of the EOC COVID-19 Response team have been 30 UMaine community members who, in addition to their normal duties, stepped up and worked tirelessly to ensure that our university communities had the support needed to come through this pandemic. This award recognizes their extraordinary level of service and dedication.”

The EOC COVID-19 Response Team, led by UMaine police chief Roland LaCroix as primary incident commander, was initiated in February 2020 and has remained active throughout the pandemic, meeting daily to address health and safety needs. In spring 2020, the group of UMaine volunteers focused on safely sending students home and securing campus. The summer months were spent preparing the campuses for reopening. In late summer, the EOC COVID-19 Response Team members transitioned to plan and implement asymptomatic coronavirus testing on our campuses and at UMaine facilities and offices statewide, and to ongoing operational support and crisis management. This was accomplished through meticulous, arduous efforts every day of the week to conduct positive case tracking, contact tracing, and care and case management.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the EOC has been a critical advisory and review group for the UMaine and UMM communities, in partnership with the University of Maine System, Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the town of Orono and other stakeholders. Responsibilities of the EOC team require constant vigilance, coordination and collaboration as pandemic-related health and safety guidance evolves. Collectively, the efforts of the EOC team members affect the health and safety — the lives — of UMaine and UMM community members, and contribute to the overall well-being of the community, on and off campus.

In addition to UMPD chief LaCroix, four people serve as secondary incident commanders and section leaders: William Biberstein, director of Conferences and Institutes; Jeremy Chubbuck, associate executive director of Facilities Management; Robert Norman, UMPD lieutenant; and Kenda Scheele, associate vice president and senior associate dean of Student Life.

Other members of the EOC COVID Response Team represent Athletics, Auxiliary Services, the Collins Center for the Arts, Human Resources, and Marketing and Communications.

Contact: Margaret Nagle, [nagle@maine.edu](mailto:nagle@maine.edu)

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**Division of Marketing and Communications**  
5703 Alumni Hall  
Orono, ME 04469-5703

Tel: 207.581.3743  
Fax: 207.581.3776

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